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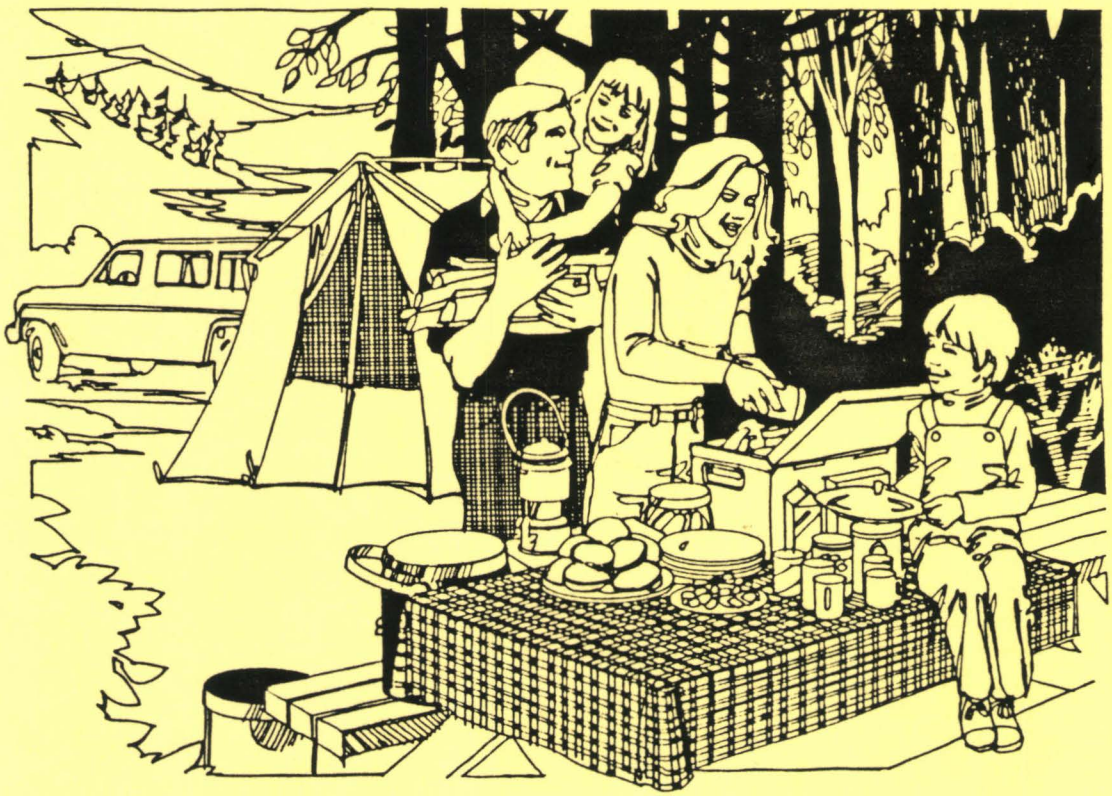
CAMPGROUND OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTING

"A Management Alternative"



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United States Department of Agriculture
Intermountain Region
Forest Service

CAMPGROUND OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS
INTERMOUNTAIN REGION
U.S. FOREST SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The National Forests in the Intermountain Region presently have more than 30 campgrounds under contract for daily operation and maintenance (O&M) during the camping season. The campgrounds are operated from just before Memorial Day to a week after Labor Day, about a 117 day season. The Contractor, or his employees, are required to remain in the campground 24 hours per day and 7 days per week.

The Uinta National Forest started O&M contracting during the 1985 field season with 2 campgrounds. This was increased to 10 sites in 1986. A total of 15 campgrounds on the Forest were placed under contract during the 1987 field season. These 15 campgrounds represent a site capacity of 6,523 PAOT (Person at one Time), or approximately 55 percent of this Forest's campground capacity.

Sites under contract within the Region include both single family and group camping units. The group sites accommodate from 50 to 150 people in each unit. They are managed by the contractor who is stationed in a nearby family campground site.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONTRACTOR

Pre-season Cleanup

The contractor is required to clean campgrounds before the beginning of each season. This includes cleaning limbs and leaves from parking and camping areas, sweeping all concrete and asphalt surfaces, cleaning fire pits and grills, and thoroughly cleaning toilets and stocking restrooms with toilet paper.

Entrance Station Manning

The contractor or his/her employee is required to man a campground entrance station at each family campground. The attendant is responsible for being in

or near the entrance station from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. to meet with campers as they enter the campground.

Entrance stations were constructed and located so that vehicles can pull up to a window and be served from an attendant standing inside. This is not required, however, and most attendants prefer to greet vehicles outside the entrance stations. The stations are most useful during inclement weather, providing protection from the rain and cold.

Besides providing a place for the attendant to work from, the entrance station serves other purposes. Although not essential for operation of the campground, an entrance station provides a professional appearance that indicates to the public that the campground is continually manned. The public recognizes it as a place to stop and pay fees as well as a place to obtain information or emergency services.

Uniforms

Attendants should be required to wear regulation Forest Service uniforms without the badge, while on duty in the campgrounds. The Chief's Office has now authorized uniforms for Recreation site Contractors (See Figure 2 in Appendix). Special name tags will identify them as contractors and show the person's name. Uniforms allow attendants to look professional and helps to enhance Forest Service presence at the site. The uniform distinguishes the attendant as a source of information and authority in the campground. This is especially important when the attendant must explain regulations to violators.

Fee Collection

The attendant collects fees using a fee ticket voucher. (See Figure 1.) Tickets are bound in books of 100 and are divided into two parts by a perforation. Both sides of the ticket are filled out by the attendant. The left half of the ticket stub is retained in the ticket book; the right half is given to the camper. The camper is instructed to display the ticket stub in a visible place in his/her camping vehicle. The attendant can make change for the camper as well as refunds, if appropriate. This is a distinct advantage over the former system.

The campground attendant places collected fees in a safe deposit box. Under this system, safekeeping of collections is the responsibility of the contractor. The Forest Service is not liable for collection thefts.

The contractor is required to deposit campground collections at least once a week to a financial institution of his/her choosing.

Once every 14 days, the contractor submits all filled fee ticket books, a cashier's check, and all personal checks in the exact amount of the total cash collections for the campgrounds. The Forest then performs an audit to ensure that collections submitted match amounts shown as collected on ticket book stubs.

Cleanup and Light Maintenance

The contractor is responsible for daily cleanup in the campground during the camping season.

The campground attendant is responsible for:

1. Toilet Cleaning - Inspects toilets daily, sweeping floors and stocking with toilet paper. At least twice weekly, toilet bowl risers and urinals are cleaned. At least once a week, floors are washed and the complete interior of toilets are washed, as needed.

2. Table Cleaning - Cleans tables of food particles or litter daily; washes tables at least once a week.

3. Fire Ring, Stoves, and Grill Cleaning - Removes ashes from fire rings as soon as they are more than half full. Cleans grill surfaces of grease and food particles.

4. Fountains and Hydrants - Removes grease and residue, and maintains drains. Performs minor plumbing repairs to stop leaks.

5. Garbage and Ash Removal - The attendant is responsible for picking up all litter within the campground on a daily basis. Ashes from fire rings are collected, as neccessary. The contractor is responsible for hauling the garbage and ashes to the closest landfill a minimum of twice a week.

6. Special Cleaning and Maintenance Items - In some campgrounds, the contractor was also responsible for additional cleanup areas. These included a fish cleaning station, boat launching ramp, and an adjacent day use area and lake. The contractor was also responsible for painting one-third of the picnic tables in most campgrounds each year.

Reservation System Management

In February 1988, the National Forests in Utah implemented a nationwide toll-free, phone-in reservation system for single family and group camp sites using a separately contracted reservation service. The reservation service books reservations for the Forests and then transmits them electronically to the District Ranger's offices. The reservation service is provided at no cost to the National Forests, the contractor earns their income by charging a convenience fee to the camper at the time the reservation is made. The reservation bookings are delivered by the Districts to the campground attendants at least once a week.

The campground contractor or his employees are responsible for on-site administration of the reservation system. Upon receipt of a reservation, the campground attendant schedules the camper using a calendar or filing system. In most cases, the attendant will schedule the camper in a particular campsite in the campground.

The attendant will post a reservation notice at the reserved campsite at least 5 to 7 days before the arrival of the camper. The attendant checks reservation vouchers for arriving visitors, directing them to the appropriate reserved site in the campground.

Providing Campground Regulation and Other Visitor Information

The Contractor is responsible for informing campers of Forest Service campground regulations and policies. Following are problems frequently encountered in the campgrounds that the attendant must deal with:

1. Site Over-Crowding - The attendant is responsible for ensuring that campsite capacity for people and vehicles is not exceeded. This is necessary in order to avoid damage that will result from over-use by people (vegetation trampling, etc.) and to avoid congestion problems from too many vehicles at one site.

2. All Terrain Vehicles and Motorcycles - The attendant ensures that unlicensed off-road vehicles are not used in the campground and directs the user to an area where they can be appropriately used for recreation.

3. Disturbances and Loud Parties - The attendant is responsible for advising campers when they are disturbing the privacy of other campground users, and when quiet hours should be observed.

4. Pets Off Leash and Horses - Owners of these animals are informed of the regulations.

5. Forest Garbage Policy - Some Forests have a pack-in, pack-out garbage policy that requires Forest visitors to take trash home with them. The attendant provides campers with garbage bags when they enter the campground. Using a "Good Host" approach, the attendant informs visitors of the policy.

The contractor and his/her employees are instructed not to enter into potentially dangerous situations that might endanger their personal safety. In the event that a person or party will not comply with Forest Service regulations after they have been informed, the campground attendant is instructed to gather information on the violator, such as the license plate number of their vehicle. As soon as possible, the attendant provides the information to a Forest Service law enforcement officer, or if a particularly severe violation to the local Sheriff's office.

In addition to informing the campground user of regulations, the attendant is responsible for providing a variety of other visitor information. The attendant provides travel maps and can direct campers to nearby attractions or recreation opportunities. He/she provides brochures on Forest Service Camp Stamps and encourages visitors to use them. They also provide information on the campsite reservation system and encourage campers to use the system.

WHAT THE FOREST SERVICE PROVIDES

As part of the contract, the Forest provides the following:

1. Paper Products and Garbage Bags - This includes all toilet paper and paper towels as well as plastic garbage bags to give out to the campers.

2. Cleaning Fluids and Disinfectants

3. Fee Ticket Books - These books are printed and sequentially numbered by the Forest. They are transferred to the contractor as accountable property.

4. Handouts, Maps, and Brochures

5. Training - The Forest provides a pre-season training session for the contractor and his/her employees. Topics discussed include being a "Good Host," proper cleaning procedures, Camp Stamps, Reservations, and Forest travel maps.

6. Camping Site - The Forest provides a campsite near the entrance station with a waste disposal vault at no charge to the contractor.

7. Entry Station, Gate, and Traffic Directional Control Device - These items have been installed at most campgrounds for an average cost of $2,200 per campground.

WHAT THE CONTRACTOR PROVIDES

As part of the contract, the contractor provides:

1. Manpower - The necessary number of employees to meet the requirements of the contract.

2. A camping trailer for the campground attendant.

3. Tools - All tools necessary to complete cleanup duties, including mops, brooms, and hoses.

4. Vehicles - A vehicle, auto or truck, to perform cleanup and haul litter and ashes.

5. Uniforms - The contractor is responsible for purchasing and providing all Forest Service uniforms for use by the campground attendants. Contractors are now authorized to purchase direct from Lyon Apparel (See Fig. 2).

BENEFITS

The Region's experience with campground operation and maintenance contracting has shown several benefits.

An important benefit has been a noticeable reduction in vandalism and theft in the campgrounds under contract. With attendants on duty 24 hours a day plus closing the gates at 10:00 p.m., we have increased security in the campgrounds.

Campers can still leave the site at night through the one-way directional control device commonly known as a tire ripper. The attendants have been instructed to allow campers in after 10:00 p.m. if they have a valid reason for entering the campground. Prior to contracting, many campers were victimized by thieves who would drive through during the night. Acts of vandalism occasionally caused destruction of thousands of dollars of Forest Service facilities. These problems have been almost completely eliminated by closing

the gate at night. Visitors have expressed that they feel an increased sense of security and enjoyment because there is an attendant onsite at all times.

There has been a significant increase in fee collections from prior years at almost every campground placed under contract (See table 1.) In 1987, fees increased $59,192 over fees collected previously using force account methods on the Uinta National Forest. This amounted to a 67 percent increase in fees collected under the contract system. This has resulted from an attendant being available to collect fees from campers as they enter the campground. Virtually no room has been left for campers to ignore fee payment, unlike the previous self-service fee payment system. The attendant is also able to provide change for the campers, enabling them to pay the exact fee. In the past, many campers would not pay under the self-service system unless they had the exact fee amount in cash or had their checkbook.

As mentioned previously, attendants manage the Forest campsite reservation system in the campgrounds. While the Forest has accepted and managed reservations for group sites for many years, single family reservations were not taken largely because of the inability to provide on-site management that is required. This is now facilitated by the attendant who schedules and posts reservations, greets visitors as they enter the campground, and resolves any problems, if they arise.

Other campground contracting benefits include transferring cleanup, fee collection, and counting duties to the contractor. This results in a cost savings to the Government. While seasonal or human resource program employees were formerly used to perform these duties, their efforts can now be focused on other recreation work, such as facility maintenance and improvement and better management of dispersed recreation areas and facilities.

To provide the same level of service to the public that the contractor provides, one Forest in the Region would have to hire over 20 additional seasonal employees. With a campground contract, the contractor is responsible for hiring and firing employees. The Forests do not have to be concerned about paying unemployment costs associated with seasonal employee layoffs.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Several factors need to be considered before initiating a contract for campground operation and maintenance.

There will be costs associated with contract administration. This will include time spent in contract development, advertising, and award. When the contract is in place, audits and inspections will be necessary on a frequent basis to ensure that the requirements of the contract are being met. Someone will need to be responsible for inspections and audits, which generally need to done every 2 weeks throughout the summer.

Unless provided for in the contract, the Forest Service is responsible for delivering supplies, reservations, and fee ticket books, as needed, to the attendants in the campgrounds.

The possibility of the contractor defaulting during the operating season must be considered. It may be necessary for the Forest to take over operation of the campground until a new contractor can be put in place. The risk of default should be reduced by a sound and thorough contractor evaluation and selection process and by requiring bonding on the part of the contractor.

There may be start-up costs to provide the necessary facilities to have an attendant on the site. Many Forests have installed waste disposal vaults at the entrance to several campgrounds in order to accommodate a trailer for the attendant. There are also costs associated with building an entrance station, gates, and traffic directional control devices, if needed.

Although the operation and maintenance contracts are almost "full-service," there are operational costs that must be considered to keep the campgrounds open. These include heavy maintenance costs, such as replacement of tables, grills, fire rings, or repair of water or sewer systems. Pumping of toilet vaults would also be an additional expense if it is not included in the contract.

RECRUITMENT OF CONTRACTORS

Many full-time contracting corporations have been started in the last few years which do nothing but supply campground contracting services to Federal and State agencies. These corporations are generally on Contracting Officer's mailing lists and subscribe to the Commerce Business Daily. Even though Forests are required to advertise through the Commerce Business Daily, it is entirely appropriate to send notices to local school districts and universities asking them to inform their employees of this excellent summer time job opportunity. Many of these local people can do an excellent job for you.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH THE CAMPGROUND CONTRACTOR

1. If a campground will be operated and maintained in a full-service manner, including fee collections, deposits, and reservation management responsibilities, it is recommended that potential contractors be evaluated on technical evaluation criteria as well as bid price. This will require contractors to submit a technical proposal for operation of the campground, addressing previous experience of the firm or individuals to be working in the campground and a detailed description of how the work will be accomplished.

2. After the contract is awarded, a prework training session should be held with the contractor and his/her employees to discuss performance expectations. Topics should include a discussion of clean-up requirements, campground regulation enforcement, safety, being a "good host" to campground visitors, and the fee collection and refund policy.

3. Hold a "cleaning day" session prior to opening the campground. Demonstrate how the facilities need to be cleaned. Do the cleaning while they observe and make it clear that you expect the same effort from them.

4. After the campground opens, conduct inspections at least once a week. Inspections can be done less frequently after the contractor demonstrates continued satisfactory performance. If necessary, hold a "refresher" course on how you want the facilities cleaned.

5. Only one person in your organization should hold discussions with the contractor and his/her employees about performance or contract requirements. Make sure the contractor understands that they are to deal with that one person and not take directions from others. Instruct others in your organization, who have "problems" with the contractor, to discuss them with the person designated as the contract administrator.

6. If the contractor is responsible for collecting campground fees, audits should be done on a regular basis during the camping season. Establish a method of verifying that fee collections made by the campground attendant are accurate. This will probably require you or someone from your agency or organization to drive through the campground and inspect fee envelopes or tickets of campers on an intermittent basis.

7. Set up an efficient method of delivering campground supplies to the contractor. We suggest checking with the contractor weekly and delivering supplies at a pre-designated time each week. The same applies to delivering reservations to the contractor if the campground is under a reservation system.

8. You need to ensure that the contractor and his employees are informing campers of campground regulations properly and are dealing with campers in a congenial and friendly manner. One way is to wait until you get either complaints or complimentary letters from campground users. A better way is to frequently visit with the campers in the campground and get their impressions first-hand.

TABLE I

COST ANALYSIS - FORCE ACCOUNT vs CONTRACTING
UINTA NATIONAL FOREST CAMPGROUNDS

The following is a compilation of benefits derived from Contract operation of 15 campgrounds versus Force Account operation of these campgrounds. Adminstrative costs are added to both the contract and force account costs per year:

CAMPGROUND	ESTIMATED FORCE ACCOUNT COSTS/YEAR	CONTRACT BID/YEAR PLUS ADMIN./COSTS	O&M $ SAVED BY CONTRACT INSTEAD OF FORCE ACCOUNT	INCREASE IN $ COLL/ YEAR UNDER CONTRACT	TOTAL O&M $ SAVED AND FEE COLLEC. INCREASE
GRANITE FLAT	$12,150	$10,450	$1,700	$5,922	$7,622
MT. TIMPANOGOS THEAT/IN/THE PINES	$9,200	$6,891	$2,309	$190	$2,499
LITTLE MILL & NORTH MILL	$13,400	$11,440	$1,960	$7,535	$9,495
DIAMOND & PALMYRA	$12,300	$9,475	$2,825	$3,102	$5,927
PONDEROSA & BEAR CANYON	$13,750	$9,175	$4,575	$3,074	$7,649
PAYSON LAKES	$19,400	$12,950	$6,450	$10,780	$17,230
BLACK HAWK GROUP SITES	$18,325	$12,050	$6,275	$4,200	$10,475
CURRANT CREEK	$15,562	$9,866	$5,696	$14,257	$19,953
LODGEPOLE	$13,600	$8,035	$5,565	$8,200	$13,765
TIMPOONEKE & ALTAMONT	$10,150	$7,534	$3,616	$2,057	$5,673
TOTALS	$137,837	$97,866	$40,971	$59,317	$100,288

It must be noted that the above is not an exact comparison because contract operations offer the following services and benefits above and beyond a typical force account operation:

1. An attendant is on site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for a 117 day period. This contributes to a greater sense of security and enjoyment by the camper and reduces vandalism costs to the camper and the Forest Service.

2. An entry station is manned where 100% fee compliance is insured and Good Host information can be given to the public.

3. A single family unit reservation system can be implemented with an attendant at the site to handle administrative work.

Campground Fee Ticket

Figure 1

United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | WO

Reply to: 6150 Uniforms | Date: MAR 2 2 1988

Subject: Uniforms for Recreation Site Contractors

To: Regional Forester, R-4

We have reviewed your proposal for the above subject and feel it has merit.

Based on a meeting with the WO Recreation and Personnel and Civil Rights Staffs, it was decided that for public relations purposes and ease of implementation, it would be better for contractors on recreation sites to wear the regular field uniform including the Forest Service shield.

We are therefore approving your proposal as follows:

1. The uniform would consist of the baseball hat, field shirt, field jeans/slacks, and the windbreaker. The shirt, hat, and windbreaker will have the Forest Service shield which is provided by Lion Apparel.

2. Contract employees would not wear the Forest Service badge, but would wear a bronze nameplate identifying the employee and contractor.

3. The contract with the contractor will spell out Forest Service policy on wearing the uniform including appearance standards. The contract would spell out misuse of the uniform, such as wearing during off-duty hours.

4. Authorized contractor(s) will purchase directly from Lion Apparel using the approved Forest Service catalog and order blanks. Orders will be consolidated by the contractor to the extent practicable.

5. The R-4 Regional Office will furnish the WO Uniform Program Coordinator with the names and addresses of each authorized contractor. Deletions and additions to the list will be done promptly by the R-4 Regional Office.

Implementation will be relatively easy and your WO contacts are Judy Lyons or Dale Nelson in the Personnel and Civil Rights Staff.

WILLIAM L. RICE

WILLIAM L. RICE
DEPUTY CHIEF

DNelson:jeg:dg:3/18/88

cc: Landon Evans, Lion Apparel
cc: Jordon Williams, Unita NF

Figure 2